

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 09523 281806Z

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TAGS: OEXC, NI
SUBJECT: CU/CP: B. B. KING

REF: (A) LAGOS 9320, (B) ACCRA 7086; (C) STATE 232343

1. SUMMARY: B.B. KING'S APPEARANCES IN LAGOS WERE AN UNEQUIVOCAL SUCCESS, DUE IN LARGE PART TO HIS WINNING PERSONALITY. KING WAS MODEST, UNASSUMING, DOWN TO EARTH, BUT STRAIGHTFORWARD, WHICH MADE HIM A TRUE CULTURAL AMBASSADOR.

2. B. B. KING CAME TO NIGERIA AND ESTABLISHED RAPPORT WITH LOCAL COLLEAGUES IN A WAY UNRIVALED BY PREVIOUS AMERICAN PERFORMERS. FROM THE ARRIVAL PRESS CONFERENCE TO THE LAST OF MANY INTERVIEWS THAT HE GRACIOUSLY PERMITTED(HE SAID HE ENJOYED THEM BECAUSE HE LEARNED A LOT), KING WAS ENGAGING, VERY WILLING TO HAVE DIALOGUE WITH ALL WHO SOUGHT IT. HE EASILY GRASPED LOCAL CONSIDERATIONS AND HANDLED TRICKY QUESTIONS WITH COOL, DIPLOMATIC AWARENESS. LIKEWISE HE SHOWED GREAT FLEXIBILITY IN ADAPTING TO LOCAL SITUATION, ESPECIALLY OUR REASONS FOR CHANGING HOTELS, A QUALITY MUCH LESS APPARENT IN BUSINESS MANAGER MYERS (WHO PREFERRED RAISING HIS VOICE TO DIPLOMACY).

MYERS UNILATERALLY DEMANDED THAT GROUP BE MOVED FROM CABAN BAMBOO BECAUSE IT WAS NOT THE "BEST AVAILABLE," DESPITE CONCURRENCE WITH
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PAGE 02 LAGOS 09523 281806Z

ARRANGEMENT, AS OUTLINED IN OUR 9320, CABLED FROM DAKAR.WE WERE ABLE

TO SQUEEZE ROOMS FROM MAINLAND HOTEL, WHERE WE HAD CANCELLED DAY EARLIER, TO ACCOMMODATE MYERS'S DEMANDS. HOWEVER, WHEN KING DISCOVERED GROUP WAS MOVING (MYERS HAD NOT TOLD HIM) HE IMMEDIATELY GRASPED THE IMPLICATIONS OF WALKING OUT ON BOBBY BENSON, HIS NIGERIAN COUNTERPART,

AND REFUSED TO MOVE. HE ALONE REMAINED AT CABAN BAMBOO.

3. THE GROUP WAS RELATIVELY EASY TO WORK WITH, AND THEY WERE VERY RESPONSIBLE IN MEETING APPOINTMENTS. BUT WHILE QUINT DAVIS WAS QUITE COOPERATIVE, MYERS CLAIMED FINAL DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY, AND HE WAS OFTEN NOT ON HAND. THIS SHORT CIRCUITED COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN USIS AND GROUP. FOR INSTANCE, DAVIS AUTHORED CABLE OKAYING CABAN BAMBOO AND MYERS CLAIMED TO KNOW NOTHING ABOUT IT UNTIL HE ARRIVED AT HOTEL.

4. PROBLEM OUTLINED IN ACCRA 7086 VIS-A-VIS COSEY AS OFFICIAL MEMBER DID NOT ARISE.

5. KING'S PUBLIC APPEARANCES WERE UNQUESTIONED SUCCESS IN TERMS OF AUDIENCE APPRECIATION FOR HIS MUSIC. IT WAS A FINANCIAL LOSS FOR USIS. HIS WORKSHOP/CONCERT AT UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS WAS WELL ATTENDED AND THE STUDENTS ENJOYED HIS PRESENTATION. THE NOVEMBER 25 PUBLIC CONCERT WAS A NEAR FULL HOUSE, HOWEVER TICKET PRICES HAD BEEN SLASHED. PROBLEM WAS WITH LOCAL COSPONSOR, MUSICIAN FOUNDATION, WHO PROVED NOT UP TO TASK AND MINIMALLY FULFILLED OBLIGATIONS ON PUBLICITY AND CONCENT ARRANGEMENT.

6. KING'S ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIAN VISIT WAS "A FANTASTIC EXPERIENCE" AND AS HE LEFT CABAN BAMBOO, TOLD BOBBY BENSON "I'LL BE BACK, SO SAVE MY ROOM." HE REALIZED THAT HE WAS NOT WELL KNOWN AMONG ALL GROUPS, BUT SAID, "THOSE WHO HEARD ME NOW KNOW ME; THEY SEEMED TO ENJOY IT." IN TERMS OF CU/CP OBJECTIVES OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE THROUGH PERFORMING ARTS AND PERSONAL DIALOGUE, WE COULD HAVE ASKED NO MORE OF KING. AIRGRAM FOLLOWS.
CROSBY

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